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Summary record of the 247th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 7 April 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Cisternas Reyes

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

Initial report of Lithuania (continued) (CRPD/C/LTU/1, CRPD/C/LTU/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Lithuania took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 11-20

2. **Ms. Pabedinskienė** (Lithuania) said that increasing awareness of disability issues was a cross-cutting priority for all government departments. Numerous written, visual and electronic platforms were used to communicate information about the rights of persons with disabilities, and traditional media such as radio and television played an important part in those efforts. In addition, in 2016 four regional festivals would be organized to bring together persons with and without disabilities to share experiences and to promote a culture of inclusion. Awards were presented for socially responsible enterprises and for the issuance of publications intended for persons with disabilities. NGOs organized seminars on disability for the police, justice system employees, health-care professionals, the media and government officials.

3. The low number of complaints about discrimination lodged by persons with disabilities underscored the need for the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman to increase its efforts and its cooperation with NGOs to promote awareness of disability rights. Increased public awareness and a better awareness on the part of persons with disabilities on how to assert their rights would also facilitate the Government's efforts to ensure a shift from an institutional to a community-based life for persons with disabilities. Approximately €1 million had been allocated to support such a shift.

4. Significant support was received from the European Structural and Investment Funds, and that financing was supplemented by resources from the State budget. Funding for social integration in 2016 amounted to €788 million, of which €730 million had been allocated for pensions and benefits, €20 million for labour market measures for the employment of persons with disabilities and €8.5 million for the National Programme for the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities 2013-2019, an increase of 7 per cent over 2015. Most of those funds for the National Programme were allocated for social rehabilitation services organized by State-funded NGOs. The budget for such services had increased from €5.5 million in 2010. The budget for making housing and buildings accessible had increased from €1.1 million in 2009 to €1.6 million in 2016. Funding for technical assistive devices had increased from €1.8 million in 2009 to €2.2 million in 2015. The budget for rehabilitation services in sanatoriums had increased by 2 per cent in 2016, and funding for accessible public transport and mobility assistance would double by 2020. The national and local governments would maintain their efforts to increase community-based services and promote the employment of persons with disabilities. Financing for activities for persons with disabilities would continue to come from European Union funds, supplemented by allocations from the State budget.

5. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that physical punishment and restraints were deemed illegal under the provisions of the Criminal Code relating to actions that caused harm or pain. Cases of physical abuse were investigated, and the perpetrators of such acts could be punished. That interpretation of the Criminal Code had been upheld by the Supreme Court.

6. **Ms. Toleikienė** (Lithuania) said that the Law on Civil Protection and related regulations defined the roles of government agencies and local authorities in emergency

situations; they had a responsibility to ensure that plans existed to provide support to their residents. Information could be sent to vulnerable groups, for example seniors, by text messages. Residents could also call the 112 emergency line for assistance. Technical aids and subsidies were available for the purchase of mobile phones for persons with vision and hearing impairments. Mobile phone applications were being developed specifically to provide information to persons with disabilities in emergency situations.

7. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that legal amendments to the Civil Code had partially changed the provisions relating to legal capacity. The fact that legal capacity was dealt with in the Constitution made it difficult to thoroughly adapt the concept or definition without also amending the Constitution. The Committee's general comment No. 1 (2014) on article 12 served as a valuable guide for reform, and the number of persons with disabilities deprived of their legal capacity had already decreased. The Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with organizations of people with disabilities, was responsible for providing training to relevant stakeholders on such reforms. The Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman was responsible for ensuring that social care institutions observed the new norms relating to legal capacity and could make recommendations in that regard. Persons with disabilities were being provided with more support to assist them in making informed decisions. It was henceforth possible for a person with a disability to lodge a complaint if his rights in the area of legal capacity was violated, but to date no complaints had been received, no doubt because it was too early and there was still a lack of awareness of the reforms. The reforms also provided for the preparation by individuals of a so-called advance directive, or living will, in the event that they became incapacitated in the future. Only three such directives had so far been registered.

8. **Ms. Toleikienė** (Lithuania) said that a court decision regarding legal capacity must be based on an assessment by a medical professional and a social worker, using a procedure established by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in collaboration with other ministries and organizations of persons with disabilities. The time and place of the interview with the social worker were set in cooperation with the individual concerned. The individual's information was kept confidential. Family members were also interviewed by the social worker, separately from the person with a disability. Tenders for training on the latest reforms relating to legal capacity would soon be issued. Hopefully, organizations of persons with disabilities would bid to organize that training.

9. **Ms. Kandratavičienė** (Lithuania) said that the National Programme for the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities would provide funds to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the next two years to make police buildings and facilities accessible.

10. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that plans had been launched in 2015 to make courthouses accessible, in accordance with international building standards. Information about the court system must also be accessible. Persons with disabilities had the right to request legal assistance. There were two levels of assistance: initial legal aid, available to all, and secondary legal aid for persons unable to pay for a lawyer. For persons with disabilities, including in matters relating to legal capacity, secondary assistance was provided regardless of the individual's income. Assistance for persons with disabilities had returned to the level it had reached preceding the economic crisis. As part of efforts to optimize access to legal assistance, information was increasingly being made available online and was thus more accessible to persons with disabilities. Since 2014, persons receiving secondary assistance had the right to choose their lawyers rather than having one appointed by the authorities. The Ministry of Justice also provided training on how to obtain legal aid.

11. Since 2014, the Ministry of Justice had been responsible for awareness-raising about the law. In cooperation with other ministries, including the Ministry of Education, it offered classes on the law in the schools and it also provided training in civil rights. Its Internet site

provided information prepared in consultation with the Information Society Development Committee on equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination, including against persons with disabilities. Every effort was made to ensure that all persons with disability, regardless of their legal capacity, were informed about their rights. The law provided for victims of crime to receive compensation paid by the State, regardless of whether the perpetrator of the crime had the means to pay or was ever actually convicted. Further measures were envisaged based on European Union Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.

12. **Ms. Zinkevičiūtė** (Lithuania) said that persons with disabilities in the Rokiškis psychiatric hospital were free to meet with medical and administrative staff to discuss their concerns and that patients' families could also do so. Persons with mental disabilities had the right to appropriate care whether or not there had been any formal evaluation of their disabilities. Hospital staff provided treatment and organized activities, which might include for example art therapy or a patients' club. There was an online forum for the exchange of ideas. No formal regulations governed the use of restraints, which were employed only as a temporary measure on persons with mental disabilities. The Law on Mental Health Care would be amended to better define conditions for the use of restraints. In 2010 there had been 338 persons in Rokiškis Psychiatric Hospital; in 2014 there had been 138 new admissions and 123 patients had been discharged.

13. **Ms. Toleikienė** (Lithuania) added that decisions on institutional care were taken on the basis of informed consent from the individual concerned. For institutionalization to take place, an application had to be submitted to the local social security office, which assigned a social worker to assess the family's ability to support the person in question, as well as the services available in the community. In cases where inadequate support was available, usually for individuals with severe physical or mental disabilities, the persons were institutionalized. There were only one or two institutions in the country capable of meeting the needs of such persons.

14. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that the Criminal Code contained a chapter devoted to criminal liability for the violation of liberty and an article on the unlawful deprivation of liberty through placement in a medical institution, and that the offence was punishable by 5 years' imprisonment. That notwithstanding, persons with mental disabilities could legally be placed in an appropriate institution. Lithuania had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and had assigned the Seimas Ombudsman's Office the task of implementing a national torture prevention programme both at detention centres and at other institutions where residents' freedoms were restricted, including social institutions. The Seimas Ombudsman's Office had applied for accreditation as a national human rights mechanism in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Ongoing efforts were being made to improve conditions at places of deprivation of liberty for persons with disabilities through the modernization of the existing infrastructure and the opening of a new unit specifically designed to accommodate members of that group.

15. **Ms. Toleikienė** (Lithuania) said that under the national law, the rights of individuals, including the right of privacy, could not be arbitrarily restricted. Any incidents occurring at social institutions were investigated and the causes identified in order to avoid any recurrence in the future. Processes had been established, with clear documentation, to make it possible for personal responsibility to be ascertained.

16. **Ms. Urbonaitienė** (Lithuania) said that the State was currently implementing a domestic violence prevention programme and funding the establishment of a countrywide network of specialized assistance centres for victims of violence, and that the resources allocated to such activities had increased significantly. The police regularly responded to

complaints of violence, and police officials, institutional staff and social workers were trained to assist victims. The number of reports concerning victims of psychological violence had risen in 2015. The increase was mainly attributable to increased awareness of the issue among experts and a greater willingness on the part of victims to contact the relevant authorities. In 2015, psychological violence had accounted for 59 per cent of violence-related complaints filed by children, with physical violence accounting for 35 per cent and sexual violence accounting for 6 per cent. Training in the recognition of and provision of assistance to child victims of sexual violence had been given to a range of professionals, including members of the police, judicial officials and social workers.

17. **Ms. Toleikienė** (Lithuania) said that inter-agency cooperation involving law enforcement officials, social workers and others had been established at the national level with a view to eliminating trafficking in persons and assisting victims of human trafficking. Funding had been earmarked for such activities, and training courses had been held. In 2015, a pilot project had been launched in a number of municipalities to develop a methodology for assisting victims of trafficking. Although there were no records of persons with disabilities who had been trafficked, the threat was real, in particular with regard to persons with slight mental impairments.

18. **Ms. Žukauskaitė** (Lithuania) said that measures had been taken to prevent the exploitation of girls with disabilities at children's centres through the amendment of relevant legislation and the strengthening of supervision. The authorities were working to reduce the number of such institutions to a minimum. Staff at the centres had received additional training, and the approach to education used by such institutions had been overhauled.

19. **Mr. Šniuolis** (Lithuania) said that a number of projects designed to tackle cyberbullying and other Internet-related issues were currently being implemented and a telephone helpline had been set up for children affected by such phenomena. State bodies were legally obliged to ensure that their websites were accessible to persons with disabilities. Private individuals running websites had no such legal obligation, but efforts were under way to persuade them to take similar action.

20. **Ms. Zinkevičiūtė** (Lithuania) said that sterilization and abortion were both strictly regulated. There had been no cases of persons with disabilities being subjected to those procedures, and consequently no corresponding investigations had been carried out. All visits to clinics were carefully documented, as were any consultations with psychologists.

21. **Ms. Kandratavičienė** (Lithuania) said that the Law on Social Services had been amended to cover the enablement, consultation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. During the period between 2007 and 2013, €4.3 million had been allocated to alternative care institutions, and the number of day centres and social service units had risen significantly. Persons with severe disabilities still had to wait for long periods before receiving assistance. Between €1 million and €2 million a year was allocated to the adaptation of the infrastructure at inpatient care facilities. There were plans to invest another €17.2 million in other services for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The European Social Fund had earmarked €76 million for the improvement of infrastructure and the provision of services for persons with disabilities. A new approach to care for young persons with disabilities, emphasizing individual needs assessment, was currently being adopted, and some €5 million had been allocated in support of it. Methodologies had been developed taking into account the wishes and requirements of persons with disabilities and their families. New types of assistance would be provided to persons with mental impairments, including through a sheltered housing programme.

22. **Ms. Toleikienė** (Lithuania) said that a number of NGOs were currently cooperating with the national authorities to promote independent living and to provide personal

assistance services and information on public services in accessible formats. In 2012, personal assistance services had been provided to 9,500 persons with disabilities, and by 2015 the number of beneficiaries had risen to 11,000, with some €1.2 million allocated to cover the cost of such services. The national authorities were working with representatives of persons with disabilities to design specific qualifications for personal assistants. Some 4,000 persons would be trained to provide such assistance.

Articles 21-33

23. **Ms. Quan-Chang** said that she was concerned that current attitudes in the State party towards the treatment and institutionalization of persons with disabilities were similar to those prevailing during the time of the Soviet Union. She asked whether the proposed new legislation on mental health care would focus on human rights in particular and whether organizations of persons with disabilities were being consulted about the new legislation's formulation and adoption. The State party should consider adopting a broader concept of sexual and reproductive health, in line with the Convention and other international human rights standards, in order to eliminate discriminatory practices relating to the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights by persons with disabilities, in particular women and girls. The delegation should describe plans to bring the Office of the Ombudsman into line with the Paris Principles.

24. **Mr. Tatić** asked for further information on the accessibility of electoral campaigns to persons with disabilities, the provision of sign language interpreting and captioning for electoral debates broadcast on public television channels and the accessibility of tourist attractions, heritage sites and sports stadiums.

25. **Mr. Buntan** asked whether deaf persons could access sign language interpreting services outside of working hours and whether sign language interpreters could be called on to travel to other regions as a part of their work. Who paid for sign language services in such situations? Was there any legislation in place providing for mandatory sign language interpreting, captioning or audio description accompanying broadcast material? Were there any plans to repeal the Law on Social Enterprises, which appeared to promote sheltered workshops rather than open labour markets for persons with disabilities? He asked whether money from the European Structural and Investment Funds had been used to subsidize social enterprises, whether measures had been taken to eliminate the use of the term "person with no working capacity" when referring to persons with disabilities with significant needs and whether steps had been taken to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

26. **Mr. Basharu** said that he wished to know more about the accessibility of information. The national public broadcaster had in recent years apparently reduced the number of weekly hours of programming accessible to the deaf to three. He asked what steps had been taken to provide the blind with training in information and communications technologies such as screen readers for laptops. What measures had been put in place to train health-care personnel to take the needs of persons with disabilities into account and to ensure the availability of sign language interpretation and information in Braille or audio formats at health-care facilities? Lastly, he wished to know whether blind tourists visiting the city of Kaunas, for example, had information about the city and its attractions available to them in Braille and whether deaf tourists could count on the availability of sign language interpretation.

27. **Mr. Kim** Hyung Shik asked what plans the authorities had to transition from reliance on special education to inclusive education. What was the difference between the social enterprises frequently mentioned in the State party's report (CRPD/C/LTU/1) and sheltered workshops? Had such workshops been effective in creating more jobs for persons

with disabilities? What were the working conditions like? Did the income those enterprises generated justify the heavy subsidies they received, and were they able to market their output?

28. **Ms. Degener** noted the recommendations made in the context of the universal periodic review of 2011 (A/HRC/19/15, recommendations 89.31 and 89.32) that the State party should take measures to facilitate access to the labour and employment market for persons with disabilities. In particular, she wished to know how much money from European Union Structural and Investment Funds had gone towards supporting the employment of persons with disabilities in the open labour market and how much had gone towards their employment in segregated labour activities. Her understanding was that social enterprises provided only segregated job opportunities. Was reasonable accommodation provided as a matter of course only at those enterprises?

29. **Mr. Pyaneandee** said that the State party urgently needed to designate or establish an independent mechanism to monitor implementation of the Convention and enable persons with disabilities to exercise their rights.

30. **Ms. Kingston** asked how committed the State party was to including persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To what extent were persons with disabilities and their representative organizations involved in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

31. **Mr. You** Liang said that he would welcome information on efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities did not face a disproportionate risk of poverty and that they had full control over their expenditures, if necessary with the help of supported decision-making.

32. **Mr. Langvad** (Country Rapporteur) said that, although the State party had provided the Committee with a good deal of statistical information, it was still hard for him to form a clear picture of how such information helped change perceptions of persons with disabilities in public agencies, the health sector or the general public. What did the State party intend to do to ensure that the statistics it collected helped it implement the provisions of the Convention? The delegation should confirm that all persons with disabilities had the capacity to marry, found a family and adopt children. He would welcome more information on substantive matters relating to the accessibility of justice. Many of the replies to questions about access to justice had appeared to focus on such issues as physical access to courthouses for wheelchair users. How did the State party ensure that the lawyers who provided persons with disabilities with free legal advice or defended them in court knew how to deal with their clients?

33. Could the new legislation on mental health be considered fully compliant with articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Convention? What statistical data were collected on the results of involuntary treatment of persons with disabilities, and how many children under 3 years of age were still placed in institutions? He would welcome confirmation that younger persons with disabilities could choose not to live among older persons. What training did health-care workers receive in taking a human rights-based approach to disability, especially in relation to persons with psychosocial disabilities? He also asked what plans the State party had to make elections fully accessible to all persons with disabilities.

34. **The Chair** asked what steps the State party had taken to increase the availability and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities and strengthen the system of job quotas for them, as recommended by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its concluding observations on the second periodic report of Lithuania (E/C.12/LTU/CO/2). She also asked what percentage of persons with disabilities had access every year to vocational rehabilitation. What efforts had the State party made to provide for the integration and effective participation of women with disabilities in the labour market, as recommended by the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination against Women in its concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Lithuania (CEDAW/C/LTU/CO/5)?

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

35. **Mr. Paulauskas** (Lithuania) said that most of the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty could be or had already been implemented in Lithuania. Ratification of the Treaty had for the time being been delayed by a dispute as to whether it fell under the sole competence of the European Union. Since the adoption of a parliamentary decree calling for the Seimas Ombudsman's Office to become the country's national human rights institution, a considerable amount of work had been done to ensure that the Office could function in that capacity with A status, in accordance with the Paris Principles, and the requisite application had been submitted in late 2015. He expected the review of the application to be completed in the coming months.

36. **Ms. Urbonaitienė** (Lithuania) said that the number of television programmes with subtitles or sign language interpretation was insufficient. The director of the national public broadcasting company had been made aware of the problem, and efforts had been made to address the country's shortage of sign language interpreters. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour had organized a programme to help blind people live at home. It involved teaching them a number of useful skills, including how to use information and communication technologies.

37. **Ms. Žukauskaitė** (Lithuania) said that the special education system had previously been separate from the mainstream system. However, in accordance with the Law on Education, all children were now educated together, which was a significant development. There was no special education department within the Ministry of Education, but there was an educational assistance division that was responsible for inclusive education. An inclusive education action plan had been put in place for the period 2014-2016. The per capita budget for students with disabilities to provide them with equipment, tools and adequately trained teachers amounted to 35 per cent more than the respective amount allocated for students without disabilities. Lithuania was a participant in a recently begun project on the funding of inclusive education supported by the European Commission. Not all schools in Lithuania had been adapted to be accessible for students with physical disabilities because many had not yet been sufficiently modernized. The European Union Structural and Investment Funds had allocated €3 million to modernize the physical environment of schools and to adapt and improve the approach to teaching. There were plans to use those funds to ensure that up to 80 per cent of all schools would be modernized, and accessibility would therefore improve in the future. The Lithuanian Forum of the Disabled had in its alternative report pointed out problems with the quality of home schooling. Home schooling was sometimes misused, and the outcome of such misuse was the very opposite of inclusive education. A dialogue on that issue had been initiated with the participation of the Ministry of Health to resolve abuses of the home schooling system. According to data provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, there were 5,000 children with disabilities in Lithuania, thousands of others considered to have impairments and 3,500 with learning difficulties. There were plans to reduce the number of children in special schools as far as possible. A number of ministries were involved in efforts to achieve that objective.

38. **Ms. Urbonaitienė** (Lithuania) said that the Ministry of Social Security and Labour had earmarked half a million euros to provide social support to students in higher education, thus benefiting around 1,000 students. The 2016-2018 action plan for implementation of the National Programme for the Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities included activities to adapt the physical environment and improve accessibility for students with disabilities in higher education facilities in 2017.

39. **Ms. Zinkevičiūtė** (Lithuania) said that Lithuanian obstetric facilities were adapted so that women with disabilities could give birth and receive appropriate health care. Adequately trained health-care professionals were also available to women with disabilities who chose to give birth in their homes. There was therefore no discrimination against pregnant women with disabilities in terms of access to health-care facilities and services.

40. **Ms. Mešlkauskienė** (Lithuania) said that a number of important buildings, including those at cultural sites, had to be adapted to make them accessible for persons with disabilities, and all new buildings must be constructed in an accessible manner. In addition, by law, all signage and information resources in cities, parks and natural reserves must be accessible to persons with disabilities. All of the necessary steps had been taken to ensure that the five facilities used for basketball events, including their sanitary facilities, met all requirements for accessibility.

41. **Ms. Radišauskienė** (Lithuania) said that the new draft labour code would provide safer and more flexible conditions to integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market. Flexible working arrangements such as part-time work or remote work would be facilitated. At present, only 28 per cent of persons with disabilities were in employment. It was therefore important to improve their access to the labour market and to create a favourable working environment adapted to their needs. Under the current Labour Code, employers were required to create healthy and safe conditions for all employees and to assess health and safety risks. Around 11,000 persons with disabilities had been registered on the labour exchange over the last five years. That number was too low. Between 2007 and 2013, around €197 million had been allocated to various measures addressing the labour market, including measures benefiting persons with disabilities, and more funding had been provided since 2014; still more was budgeted for the period up to 2020. In 2016 there were 350 more people with disabilities in employment than in 2014. Although the numbers were low, progress had been made, and more persons with disabilities had found employment. The vast majority of persons with disabilities in employment, approximately 90 per cent, were employed under labour contracts, which meant that they had a certain degree of job security.

42. A working group had been set up in order to decide whether the Law on Social Enterprises should be repealed or simply amended. A number of provisions of the law had already been amended and improved. The working group had also decided that 15 per cent of the profit made by social enterprises should be used to support their key objective, namely to increase employment of all persons belonging to the target group, which included persons with disabilities. In Lithuania around 8,000 people worked in social enterprises, 7,000 of whom were persons with disabilities, including 300 with severe disabilities. The salary subsidy allocated to persons with severe disabilities amounted to €380 per month per person, and for those with moderate disabilities it was €300 per month. The number of social enterprises in Lithuania had grown and they now offered more employment options for those persons with disabilities seeking work there.

43. **Ms. Pabedinskienė** (Lithuania) said that the number of social enterprises had increased from 123 in 2013 to 147 in 2016. The number of persons employed had also increased, from 3,200 in 2013.

44. **Ms. Milašiūtė** (Lithuania) said that, in accordance with the Constitution, citizens who had been declared "incapable", or legally incompetent, were not able to participate in elections. In accordance with the law, municipalities were required to accommodate persons with disabilities such as hearing impairments or blindness at polling stations. A new bill was being drafted with a view to setting up an Internet voting system. There were also plans to adapt the method of voting to specific disabilities in order to provide individually tailored solutions to problems encountered when voting.

45. **Ms. Čaplikienė** (Lithuania) said that, because the current voting procedures were not yet satisfactory, efforts would be made to improve accessibility and expand the options available to persons with disabilities when voting. Civil society organizations representing persons with disabilities were able to observe elections to check compliance with the relevant legislation. Surveys were carried out at all government ministries to collect data on persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour collected information on the financial support allocated to persons with disabilities. The data served as a basis for plans to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

46. **Ms. Pabedinskienė** (Lithuania) said that she would like to thank the Committee members for the constructive dialogue and their valuable comments. The delegation looked forward to receiving the recommendations of the Committee, which would help the Government to better protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

47. **Mr. Langvad** expressed his gratitude to the members of the delegation for their honest input during the dialogue. The Committee would endeavour to draft recommendations that could realistically be implemented. The delay in ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty was unfortunate and regrettable. He hoped that the Government would devote significant efforts to implementing the recommendations in the Committee's concluding observations in collaboration with civil society organizations. It was important to interpret the State's Constitution in the light of the times and not the time when it had been written. The prohibition on the right to vote for those persons declared legally incompetent was one example of a practice arising from an interpretation of the Constitution that should be revised and reconsidered.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.